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# Cleaver, Oscar Payne, 1905-1996 (MSS 106)

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## Recommended Citation

Folklife Archives, Manuscripts &, "Cleaver, Oscar Payne, 1905-1996 (MSS 106)" (2013). *MSS Finding Aids*. Paper 2677.  
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Manuscripts & Folklife Archives  
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 Western Kentucky University  
 Bowling Green, KY 42101

*Descriptive Inventory*

**MSS 106 CLEAVER, Oscar Payne, 1905-1996**

2 boxes. 17 folders. 1890-1995. 228 items.

1996.241.1

***BIOGRAPHY***

Oscar Payne Cleaver was born on January 8, 1905 in Rowletts (Hart County, KY) to Samuel Albert and Dora (Shirley) Cleaver. He attended Hart County schools. Cleaver graduated from Georgia Tech in 1928 with the highest grade point average in his class. He then went on to Yale University, where he received his Masters degree in Electrical Engineering with a minor in drama in 1930. After college he worked for Westinghouse until 1942, when he entered the Army Corps of Engineers. When he left the army in 1946, he was a Lieutenant Colonel. However, he continued as a Reserve Officer until his retirement as a full Colonel in 1964. He became a civilian employee of the Engineer Research and Development Laboratories at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, serving as Chief of the Electrical Department. In 1966, he was designated Acting Technical Director of the Army Mobility Research and Development Center at Fort Belvoir. Cleaver retired in 1968 with a combined military and civilian career of twenty- five years at Fort Belvoir. He received numerous military and civilian awards, including the two highest Army awards given to a civilian, the Meritorious Service Medal in 1962, and the Exceptional Service Medal in 1966. One of Cleaver's outstanding contributions in the area of lighting included the development of night vision techniques which were used in the Vietnam War.

Besides his military career, Cleaver is also known as the developer of an automatic theater lighting system with a modern version being used by the New York Metropolitan Opera. He is co-author of *Stage Lighting*, which became a standard work for theatrical lighting. As an engineer for Westinghouse, he developed the lighting system used for the spectacular light and fountain display that was a major attraction at the 1939 World's Fair. The same year Cleaver was sent to Hollywood to assist in solving lighting problems involved with the filming of the motion picture "Gone With the Wind." He also was involved with the Manhattan Project in the early 1940s.

Mr. Cleaver died in Florida on April 29, 1996, and is interred in Munfordville, Kentucky.

## **COLLECTION**

This small collection consists of materials related to the military and civilian careers of Oscar Payne Cleaver. It includes a number of photographs related to his work as an electrical engineer at Fort Belvoir. A large number of certificates, recognizing Mr. Cleaver's civilian and military work are included in the collection. His Masters thesis on stage lighting is included in the collection (B2,F1). A short reminiscence by Cleaver on his lighting work for the film "Gone With the Wind" is a collection highlight. Besides discussing his work, he makes comments about the actors in the film and director, David O. Selznick. The collection contains genealogical information on the Cleaver and Shirley (maternal) families, and information related to the death of Cleaver's parents.

## **SHELF LIST**

<b>BOX 1</b>		<b>1890-1995</b>	<b>227 items</b>
Folder 1	Inventory and separation sheet		2 items
Folder 2	Biographical information	1921-1995	21 items
Folder 3	Correspondence	1979-1995	17 items
Folder 4	Certificates (Oversized certificates in C1-D2,#2)	1936-1994	27 items
Folder 5	Genealogy - Cleaver and Shirley families	1984	23 items
Folder 6	Photographs	1960-1988	19 items
Folder 7	Publication - <i>Highlights of the Civilian and Military Careers of Oscar Payne Cleaver</i>	1979	3 items
Folder 8	Publication proof - <i>Highlights of the Civilian and Military Careers of Oscar Payne Cleaver</i>	1979	1 item
Folder 9	Reminiscences of working on "Gone With the Wind" [movie]	1990-1993	3 items
Folder 10	Scrapbook presented to Cleaver at military retirement	1968	1 item, 57 p.

Folder 11	Speech given by Cleaver on George Washington for Society of American Military Engineers	1951	1 item
Folder 12	Cleaver, Dora (Shirley) - Sympathy letters to O.P. Cleaver upon the death of his mother, obituaries, memorial book	1963	26 items
Folder 13	Cleaver, Dora (Shirley) - Sympathy cards sent to O.P. Cleaver upon the death of his mother	1963	19 items
Folder 14	Cleaver, Samuel Albert - Papers related to the estate of S.A. Cleaver	1890-1957	23 items
Folder 15	Cleaver, Samuel Albert - Sympathy letters to O.P. Cleaver upon the death of his father, obituaries, and memorial book	1957	9 items
C1-D2,#2	Certificates, diplomas, cartoons, coat of arms (Oversized)	1918-1976	32 items
<b>BOX 2</b>		<b>1930</b>	<b>1 item</b>
Folder 1	"New System of Stage Lighting Control" (Thesis, Yale University)	1930	1 item

### **CATALOG CARD**

MSS CLEAVER, Oscar Payne, 1890-1996  
106 1905-1996

Miscellaneous papers related to the military and civilian careers of Hart County, Kentucky, native Oscar Payne Cleaver, who was a lighting expert and was instrumental in the development of night vision equipment. Includes a brief reminiscence about his lighting work on the film "Gone With the Wind."

1 box. 16 folders. 228 items. Originals  
1996.241.1

## ***SUBJECT ANALYTICS***

Actors, actresses and acting B1,F9  
 Cartoons and cartoonists, 1968 C1-D2,#2  
 Certificates – Honorary B1-F4; C1-D2,#2  
 Cleaver, Dora (Shirley), 1879-1963 – Death of B1,F12-13  
 Cleaver, Samuel Albert, 1874-1957 – Death of B1,F14-15  
 DeHavilland, Olivia, b. 1916 – Comments about B1,F9  
 Diplomas – Georgia School of Technology, 1928 C1-D2,#2  
 Diplomas - Horse Cave High School, 1922 C1-D2,#2  
 Diplomas - Yale University, 1930 C1-D2,#2  
 Gable, William Clark, 1901-1960 - Comments about B1,F9  
 Genealogy – Cleaver family B1,F5  
 Genealogy – Shirley family B1,F5  
 “Gone With the Wind” (Motion picture) – Relating to B1,F9  
 Heraldry – Cleaver family C1-D2,#2  
 Heraldry – Shirley family C1-D2,#2  
 Howard, J. Leslie, 1890-1943 – Comments about B1,F9  
 Leigh, Vivian, 1913-1967 – Comments about B1,F9  
 Lighting – Special effects B1,F7,9,10; B2,F1  
 Motion picture producers and directors B1,F9  
 Night vision devices B1,F7&10  
 Selznick, David Oliver, 1902-1965 – Comments about B1,F9  
 Stage lighting B1,F7&9, B2,F1  
 Washington, George, 1732-1799 – Relating to B1,F11  
 World’s Fair, 1939 – Relating to B1,F9

## ***SEE and SEE ALSO CARDS***

Gable, Clark

See:

Gable, William Clark, 1901-1960

Jeffrey 03/04/2013